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# CHINESE PROVERBS

for

AMERICAN PREACHERS
and
TEACHERS

by

Adams, Archibald G.

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# C H I N E S E  P R O V E R B S

# F O R

# A M E R I C A N  P R E A C H E R S

# A N D  T E A C H E R S

## 200 CHINESE PROVERBS SIMILAR TO

## BIBLICAL TEXTS, ETC.

ARRANGED BY

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# CHINESE PROVERBS FOR AMERICAN PREACHERS

## CHINESE PROVERBS THAT ARE SIMILAR TO SCRIPTURAL TEXTS

(Wherever given the references signify page, and number of the proverb on the page, in C. Wilfrid Allan's revised and enlargod edition of W. Scarborough's "Collection of Chinese Proverbs," published by the Presbyterian Mission Press, Shanghai, in 1926.)

### I. MAN'S RELATIONS WITH "HEAVEN"

1. All the thousands and myriads of gods are but one god. 282(4) Cf. Mark 12:32.
2. When men are sincere, the gods are moved and will answer. 279(6) Cf. I Chron. 28:9 Matthew 7:7.
3. When all is well you do not offer incense, but when in pressing need you embrace Buddha's foot. 281(7) 284(8) Cf. Jerem. 2:27 b.
4. It is better to trust in God than in man. *Cf. Psalm 118:8.
5. The source of virtue is traced to heaven. *Cf. I John 2:29.
6. If a man desires to be good, Heaven will help him. Cf. Isa. 30:41.
7. Our daily bread depends upon Heaven. 43(9) Cf. Matthew 6:11.
8. Old Father Heaven does not starve even a blind sparrow. 273 (5) Cf. Psalm 104. Matthew 6:26.
9. The principles of Heaven revolve in a circle with not a hair's breadth of deviation. *Cf. James 1:17 b.
10. Though your sins fill the universe, repentance will take them away. *Cf. Ezekiel 18:28-31. Psalm 103:12.
11. If a man be not enlightened within, what lamp shall he light? If his intentions are not upright what prayers shall he repeat? 287(9) Cf. Matthew 6:23 John 3:19.
12. Although men despise one, if Heaven does not, injury is advantageous. 316(3) Cf. Matthew 5:10-12.
13. The cultivation of virtue, although unseen by men, if persevered in, will be known of Heaven. 229(1) Words spoken in secret by men sound like thunder in the ears of Heaven. 330(5) Matthew 6:4, 18.
14. A prodigal's return is a priceless treasure. 201(4) Cf. Luke 15:10.
15. You may deceive men; but you can't deceive Heaven. 272(1) Galatians 6:7.

### II. HYPOCRISY AND DECEIT

1. Do not say one thing and mean another. 250(4) Do not say "yes" before a man's face and "no" behind his back. 250(3) Cf. Matthew 5:37 II Corinthians 1:17,18 (Moffatt trans.) James 5:12.
2. One mouth, two tongues. 28(9) Cf. I Timothy 3:8.
3. His mouth is sweet as honey, his heart as venomous as a snake. 28(8) A mouth like a sweet melon, a heart like a bitter gourd. 29(2). Cf. Proverbs 5:3 James 3:10.
4. The human heart is difficult to fathom. 5(10) Cf. Jeremiah 17:9.
5. Excessive politeness covers deceit. 78(9) Cf. Proverbs 27:6.
6. A body buried in the snow will eventually be revealed. 276(8) Words whispered in the ear may be heard for a thousand "li" (equivalent to 333 miles). 325(6) Cf. Matthew 10:26 Luke 12:2.
7. Like a lampstand, he lights others but not himself. 27(8) Cf. Matthew 15:14. 23:13-33. 27:42.
8. When the blind lead the blind both will fall into the water. Cf. Matt. 15:14.
9. Outside he wears a sheep's skin; inside he hides a wolf's heart. 28(7) Cf. Matthew 7:15.
10. Incense in one hand, a spear in the other. 251(2) Cf. Psalm 55:21.
11. When you secretly sin the gods see it like a flash. 279(3) You can carry deception into the (official) "yamen", but not into the temple. 280(5) Cf. I Corin. 6:9 15:33 Galatians 6:7.

12. Enlisting Buddha's help to steal food and shoes. (Making a cloak of religion). 251(4) Cf. Matthew 23:14 and parallels.
13. Stealthily cutting a neighbor's rice in order to make gruel to be given to charity. 253(6) Cf. Matthew 23:14.
14. Better do a kindness near home than go far away to burn incense. 283(1) Cf. Matthew 5:23, 24.
15. Talking good isn't being good; doing good is. 229(4) Matthew 7:21.

## III. THE VIRTUE OF A CLEAR CONSCIENCE

1. It is impossible in all things to agree with others; but we should at all times keep a clear conscience. 226(7)
2. Men who never violate their consciences are not afraid of a knock at their door at midnight. 226(1)
3. In paying attention to important affairs, the chief thing is not to cheat your conscience. 226(4)
4. The upright in heart fear no thunder bolts. 277(4)
5. Do not put your conscience behind your back. 226(5)
6. Cheat your conscience and a whole life's happiness is destroyed. 227(2) For 1-6 Cf. Acts 24:16. Hebrews 13:18. I Timothy 1:5.
7. If the magistrate is upright the people will be contented. 340(8) Cf. II Samuel 23:3. Romans 12:8.
8. A virtuous wife brings honor to her husband; a bad one brings shame. 213(4) Cf. Proverbs 12:4. 31:31.
9. For every foot of honor shown me, I show ten. 79(7) Cf. I Sam. 2:30.
10. It is a little thing to starve to death; it is a serious matter to lose one's virtue. 235(1) Consider benevolence and righteousness important, and death of no consequence. 235(2). Better die than turn your back on what is right. 235(3) Cf. Matthew 5:29,30.
11. To become a good man is not easy; easy living will not produce good men. True gold is not afraid of fire testing. *Cf. Job 23:10. Hebrews 12:11.
12. Blame yourself as you blame others; excuse others as you excuse yourself. 233(2) Cf. Matthew 7:3-5.
13. Let those who are continually judging of other men's faults turn about and judge themselves. 233(3) Cf. Matthew 7:3-5.
14. Let each sweep the snow off his own doorstep; never mind the frost on his neighbor's roof. 95(6) Matthew 7:3-5.
15. In a melon patch do not fasten your shoe; under a plum tree do not adjust your hat. 89(3) Cf. I Thessalonians 5:22.

## IV. THE VIRTUE OF GRATITUDE

1. Contentedly till the ground and receive its increase; when warmed and fed, thank Heaven. 247(3) Cf. Psalm 67:6.
2. Better that others be ungrateful to me than that I should be so to others. 247(1) Cf. Luke 17:12-19.
3. Whether rich or poor be pleased with your lot, for he is a fool who cannot laugh (under all circumstances). 233(7) Philippians 4:11.
4. When you put on clothes remember the weaver's labor; when eating daily food remember the husbandman's hard work. 248(3)
5. When you eat bamboo sprouts, remember (in gratitude) the planter of the bamboos. 248(6) Cf. John 4:36-8. Ephesians 5:20.
6. Every grain of rice has cost a drop of perspiration.* John 4:38.
7. Though man is powerless to requite the favor of Heaven, yet Heaven is always heedful of the needs of man.* Cf. Matthew 5:45.
8. Be forgetful of favors given; be mindful of blessings received. 247(4).

## V. THE VIRTUE OF SELF CONTROL (Esp. SPEECH)

1. He who can watch a game of chess in silence is truly a superior man. 323(8) Psalm 32:9,39:1 James 3:2
2. One hurtful word can wound like a sharp sword. 328(1) The wound of a sharp knife will close, but the hate provoked by harmful words will never die. 328(2) Cf. James 3:8,9.
3. One man will circulate a false story and a hundred men will tell it as true. 265(3) Cf. Psalm 27:4.
4. Under the tongue men are crushed to death. 264(9) Cf. James 3:8,9.
5. A jar's mouth may be stopped, a man's mouth cannot. 320(4) Cf. James 3:8,9.
6. Good words are like a string of pearls. 328(4) Cf. Proverbs 25:11.
7. One word may be better than hundreds and thousands. 326(6). If one word fails of its object a thousand are of no use. 319(5) Cf. Matthew 6:7.
8. A faithful heart tranquilizes the spirits of the land; a sharp tongue overturns a nation. 323(7) Cf. Psalm 28:3, 49:3.
9. A great expanse of hill country may be burnt by a single spark of fire, so the virtue of a life time may be injured by a false report. 328(8) Cf. James 3:5,6.
10. Harsh words breed endless hate.* Cf. Proverbs 15:1.
11. Cold tea and cold rice are endurable, but to be nagged in unendurable. 58(5) Cf. Proverbs 17:1 Ecclesiastes 4:6.
12. Breaking the law is owing to lack of self-control. 332(6) Cf. Proverbs 29:18.
13. A good horse cannot wear two saddles. 61(1). No needle has two sharp points. 173(2). One foot cannot stand on two boats. 174(1). Trying to stand on two boats at once. 110(2). A loyal minister cannot serve two rulers. 192(9). Cf. Matthew 6:24 Luke 16:13.
14. She who eats the rice of one man cannot be the wife of two. 213(9)
15. He who does not covet and who can control his words will be comfortable wherever he goes. 357(4) Proverbs 28:16 Hebrews 13:5.

## V. PERILS OF POSSESSIONS

1. Man's heart is never staisfied; the snake would swallow an elephant. 5(4) Cf. Proverbs 30:15. 21:26.
2. Gold is tested by fire; man is tested by wealth. 142(1) Cf. Mark 10:23, 24. Wealth leads men astray as well as beauty. 139(3)
3. Gold is worth nothing much; peace and happiness are priceless. 142(2) Cf. Psalm 19:10.
4. Wealth gotten by wrong doing will go by wrong doing. 140(7) Cf. Proverbs 10:2.
5. Wealth is but dung; benevolence and righteousness are worth thousands of gold. 138(2) Cf. Philippians 3:8.
6. Do not seek for gold, jade and such like valuables; rather desire that each of your descendants be virtuous. 138(6) Matthew 6:19, 20.
7. Men grind a knife because they dislike it blunt; but when sharpened it cuts their fingers. Men seek wealth because they dislike poverty; but when they get much of it, it inflicts personal injury. 138(4) Cf. Mark 8:36.
8. One's feet hurry to and fro for nothing but clothes and food. 111(7) Cf. Luke 12:22.
9. Though your fields yield many bushels of rice you can eat but a pint per day; though your house be ever so large you sleep on but eight feet by night. 138(8) Cf. Luke 12: 16-20.

10. If you have few desires you will be healthy and strong; if you have many cares you health will suffer. 294(1)
11. He who neither hoards up wealth nor makes an enemy, may sleep in peace and travel in safety. 105(6) Cf. Matthew 6:19.
12. Warn men against covetousness, for wealth thus coveted provokes the wrath of Heaven. 137(3) Cf. Luke 12:15.
13. To be on good terms with one's neighbor is as good as finding treasure. 63(1) Cf. Proverbs 27:10 Hebrews 12:14.
14. Gold and silver are vain things; after death, how can they remain in your hands? 142(3) Cf. Job 1:21 I Timothy 6:7.
15. Man goes empty handed when his work on earth is done. 261(4) Naked we come; naked we go. 261(3) Cf. Job 1:21 I Timothy 6:7.

## VII. THE BENEFITS OF DISCIPLINE

1. True gold is not afraid of fire testing.* Job 23:10 Proverbs 17:3.
2. To become a good man is not easy; easy living will not produce good men.* II Timothy 2:3.
3. Good medicine is bitter to taste but will cure disease; good advice is unwelcome to the ear, but profitable to conduct.* Hebrews 12:11. 325(2)
4. He who endures hardship will become a man above other men. 275(3) II Timothy 2:3
5. Laziness in youth means sorrow in old age. 188(2) Proverbs 10:4.
6. To learn what is good a thousand days are too short; to learn what is evil an hour is too long. 4(5) Cf. Amos 5:14.
7. If there is no oil in the lamp the wick is wasted in vain. 66(4) Cf. Matthew 7:6
8. When you have fully done your duty then abide the will of Heaven.* Cf. Ephesians 6:13, 14. Lamentations 3:25, 26.
9. If he sets small tasks, his employers object to him because of his laziness; if the work is too much the scholars say they can't do it. 66(6) Cf. Galatians 1:10.
10. A man's natural gifts may be great, but it is application that gives him success. 67(6) Cf. Philippians 3:13, 14.
11. If you love your child don't spare the rod; if you hate your child give him plenty of dainties. 200(4) Cf. Proverbs 23:13 Hebrews 12:5-11.
12. The tree is easily bent when young; when grown to maturity it cannot be bent.* Proverbs 22:6.
13. Would you love your child, then teach him industry and temperance. 200(1) Cf. Proverbs 23:13.
14. One who is studious, though a peasant's son, may become a prince; a prince's son, by neglecting study, may become an ordinary person. 72(8) Cf. Acts 4:13.
15. If jade is not cut and polished it cannot be made into anything; neither is a man perfected without trials. 311(8) Cf. Hebrews 12:11. You cannot become a Buddha without suffering. 311(4) Cf. Luke 14:26, 27.

## VIII. CONSEQUENCES OF GOOD AND EVIL

1. When true love exists between husband and wife they remain united unto old age. 206(4) Cf. Eccles. 9:9
2. When the children are numerous the mother suffers. 196(6) Cf. Gen. 3:16.
3. With a healthy body a thatched cottage is comfortable; with a settled disposition even cabbage roots are fragrant. 290(3) Cf. Philippians 4:11 I Timothy 6:8 Hebrews 13:5.

4. Each must take the consequences of his own actions. 274(6) Cf. Proverbs 12:14. I Corinthians 3:8.
5. Good has its reward; evil its own punishment; if this has not been apparent (occured) it is because the time has not arrived. 275(2) Cf. Proverbs 11:21 Luke 23:41 Galatians 6:7,9.
6. Every man gets what he cultivates. 276(1) He who sows hemp will reap hemp; he who sows beans will reap beans. 275(8) Cf. Galatians 6:7,9.
7. Whoever lives in idleness must suffer hunger. 274(4) He who witholds his hand (from work) thereby witholds food from his mouth. 268(6) Cf. II Thessalonians 3:10.
8. Sailing with every wind, rowing with every current. 108(8) (Effect of irresolution.) Cf. Ephesians 4:14.
9. He who steals a needle when young will steal gold when grown up. 276(2) Cf. Ecclesiastes 12:1 Proverbs 22:6, 20:11.
10. When one sheep leads the way all the rest follow. 170(7) Cf. Isaiah 53:6.
11. Don't look at the good living of thieves; but look at them suffering punishment. 170(8) Psalm 1:1.
12. That which is near putrid fish stinks; that which is near the orchid is fragrant. 170(3) Cf. Proverbs 24:19. I Corinthians 15:33.
13. A red sky in the morning means rain in the evening; a red sky in the evening means fine weather. 355(9) Cf. Matthew 16:2,3.
14. If a countryman of mine gets beaten I am thereby weakened; 62(8) when our neighbor takes office we all rejoice. 63(2) Cf. Romans 12: 15 I Corin. 12:26.
15. When a man is wealthy he has many relatives; when poor, none. 143(8) 144(5) 147(6) Cf. Proverbs 19:4.

## IX. TIMELINESS AND ETERNITY, ET CETERA

1. There's a time to fish and a time to dry nets. 114(6) Cf. Eccles. 3:1-8.
2. There is a road to Heaven but men will not walk in it; hell has no gate but men will bore through to get there. 273(1) Cf. Matthew 7:13.
3. A gentleman will die for those who love him.* Cf. John 15:13.
4. Time is like an arrow; days and months like a weaver's shuttle. 345(3) Cf. Job 7:6.
5. This morning has no knowledge of what will be in the evening. 346(3) Cf. Proverbs 27:1.
6. All the rivers flow into the sea and yet the sea is not full. 362(4) Cf. Ecclesiastes 1:7.
7. High Heaven will not forget the man with good intent. 19(9) Cf. Matthew 6:1-4.
8. A good man will die for his friend; a woman will dress for those who appreciate her. 19(8) Cf. John 15:13.
9. Man depends on heaven as a ship on her pilot. 270(10) Cf. Luke 8:22-25. ("Jesus, Savior, pilot me.")
10. It is for me to put forth the utmost effort; it rests with Heaven to give me success. 271(5) Cf. I Corinthians 3:6,7. (Work as though everything depended upon you; pray as though everything depended upon God.)
11. Men cannot do anything without the gods(spirits); the gods cannot show their efficacy without men. 279(5) John 15:5.

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* From A. J. Brace's "500 Proverbs Commonly Used in West China."

# CHINESE PROVERBS FOR AMERICAN TEACHERS

Arranged by Prof. A. G. Adams

Taken from C. Wilfrid Allan's "Collection of Chinese Proverbs," Published by Presbyterian Mission Press, Shanghai, 1926. Number of page is given after each proverb, the number in parenthesis represents the order on the page.

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1. It is better to ward off than cure disease. 105(4) An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
2. What one hears is doubtful; what one sees is certain. 103(1) Seeing is believing..
3. Rats know the way of rats. 103(2) Set a thief to catch a thief.
4. It is easy to spend but hard to earn money. 101(2) Easy come, easy go.
5. Cut your cloth according to your measure. 100(5) Cut your cloth according to the pattern.
6. The peony, though large, is useless; the date blossom, though small, yields fruit. 100(10) Handsome is what handsome does.
7. If you know where to stop, and always stop there, you will never be in disgrace. 96(4) It's a wise man who knows when to stop.
8. Don't thrust your finger through your own paper lantern. 107(8) Don't give the show away.
9. Suffering hunger to spare one's face. 108(7) Cutting off one's nose to spite one's face.
10. He who rouses a sleeping tiger runs the risk of harm. 108(9) Let sleeping dogs lie.
11. To be careless in great matters and careful in small ones. 108(10) Penny wise and pound foolish.
12. This goes in one ear, that out of the other. 109(7) In one ear and out of the other.
13. Great profits, great risks. 114(8) Nothing venture, nothing have.
14. Every trade has its ways. 117(1) Tricks in every trade.
15. Just scales and full measures injure no man. 118(4) Honesty is the best policy.
16. One hundred jobs are not as good as one masterpiece. 132(5) Jack of all trades and master of none.
17. Bad workmen blame blunt tools. 131(2) A good workman never complains about his tools.
18. If the poor man associates with the rich, the poor man will soon have no trousers to wear. 146(9) Keeping up with the Joneses.
19. When the ear will not listen the heart escapes sorrow. 264(5) What we don't know won't hurt us.
20. In hurry is error. 159(1) Done leisurely, done well. (2) Slow work produces fine goods. (3) What is done hastily is not done well. (7) Iron long fired becomes steel. (8) Mistakes occur through haste, never through doing a thing leisurely. 162 (3) Haste makes waste.
21. What is able to be said but not able to be done. 162(8) Easier said than done.
22. Dig up a tree to get at the root. 161(1) To get at the bottom of an affair.
23. Seven hands eight feet. 161(8) Too many cooks spoil the broth.
24. Taking material from the eastern wall to repair the western wall. 253(7) Robbing Peter to pay Paul.
25. To throw into a tub of cold water. 253(4) To be a wet blanket.
26. To throw stones on a man in a well. 315(8) To lick a man when down.
27. When the vehicle in front upsets the one following takes warning. 360(5) Forewarned is forearmed.
28. When the cats away the mice come out to stretch their legs. 375(8).

29. The carpenter wears the criminal's collar which he made himself. Hoist with his own petard. 372(3)
30. A red sky in the morning means rain in the evening; a red sky in the evening means fine weather. 355(9) Red sky in the morning, Sailors take warning; Red sky at night, Sailor's delight.
31. His promise once given is as good as a thousand taels(dollars). 326(7) His word is as good as his bond.
32. Magpies and a broken egg. 321(2) Much ado about nothing.
33. Paper and a pen may take a man's life without the use of a sword. 314(6) The pen is mightier than the sword.
34. One's ten fingers can't all be the same length. 163(4) Taking the short with the long.
35. You can't clap with one hand. 163(3) It takes two to make a quarrel.
36. That which is near putrid fish stinks; that which is near the orchid is fragrant. 170(3) A man is known by the company he keeps.
37. Seeking for a needle in the ocean. 175(7) Looking for a needle in the haystack.
38. Strike while the iron is hot. 189(3)
39. Less one step, less the ferry. 190(1) A miss is as good as a mile.
40. Friends must have a high wall between them. 222(3) Good fences make good neighbors.
41. Frost only destroys solitary blades of grass. 246(3) United we stand, divided we fall. In union is strength.
42. A body buried in the snow will eventually be revealed. 276(8) Evil will out.
43. Out of the wolf's covert into the tiger's mouth. 308(9) Out of the frying pan into the fire.
44. When the rat gnaws the cat's tail it wants to be killed. 311(9) Playing with fire.
45. Wherever you go, speak as you find the people speaking. 94(9) When in Rome do as the Romans do.
46. The arm bends toward the front; the leg bends toward the back; each has its own bend. 93(8) Mind your own business.
47. If you eat his rice you must obey him. 55(3) He who pays the piper calls the tune.
48. Great wealth troubles its owner, as too much food causes discomfort to the eater. 136(6) Enough is as good as a feast.
49. Those near the temple deride the gods. 283(8) Familiarity breeds contempt.
50. Though conversing face to face, their hearts are divided as by a thousand hills. 220(1) So near and yet so far.

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